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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

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Thursday, 5 October 2017, 10.10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/811)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2017/811)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, who is joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to participate in this meeting. Mr. Annadif is also joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/811, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to interact with the Security Council this afternoon from Bamako. I thank the Secretary-General for this opportunity to introduce his report (S/2017/811) and to take stock of recent developments in the situation in Mali, including the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which emanated from the Algiers process.

I am delighted to welcome among us His Excellency Mr Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali.

The report before us covers the period from mid-June to mid-September 2017. This period was characterized by the following major developments in the political and security areas: a debate on the draft revision of the Constitution, and armed clashes between the Platform coalition of armed groups and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), which are the two signatories to the Agreement. These two events almost called into question the entire process of the implementation of the Agreement. The combined efforts of the main Malian actors, including the leaders of the signatory movements, in addition to those of the international community, made it possible to resolve the two crises, which are the main reason for the ongoing delays in the implementation of the Agreement.

With respect to the debate on the draft constitutional revision, the decision of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita to postpone the referendum has eased social tensions and put an end to the protests. As for the clashes between the CMA and the Platform, after signing renewable truces on 23 August and 6 September, the two coalitions were able on 20 September to sign a text they are calling a commitment, enshrining a total and final cessation of hostilities. The implementation of the provisions of this undertaking continues apace. In witness to that, this morning the CMA freed nine Platform prisoners in Kidal.

It was in this atmosphere of successful outcomes that the Government of Mali and the United Nations convened a high-level meeting on the implementation of the Agreement on 20 September in New York. The high-level meeting, co-chaired by the President of Mali and the Secretary-General, was attended, for the first time, by CMA and Platform officials. The many high-ranking participants stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement, including the creation of a second chamber of Parliament and the operationalization of regional associations; the launching of the cantonment and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; the drafting of a security sector reform road map; and the gradual redeployment of the reconstituted Malian defence and security forces.

The Governor of Kidal took office on 19 September, symbolizing the return of the State. In that regard, I would stress that this new impetus must be capitalized on to ensure that the return of the Governmor to Kidal will be more than merely symbolic.

Despite these positive developments, we must keep in mind that the 2018 deadlines are fast approaching and that the challenges ahead are enormous. All parties will have to redouble their efforts to restore trust between them and, despite the aforementioned delays in the implementation of the Agreement, commit to the necessary reforms and provide the peace dividends so long awaited by the people of Mali.

I recall that the human rights situation remains a matter of concern owing, inter alia, to the volatile security environment in the country. The rise of violent extremism perpetrated by armed elements, which has impeded the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms in the central regions in particular, has become very worrisome. The absence of State authorities in certain areas and the conduct of anti-terrorist operations in which human rights violations have been reported are the main causes contributing to the resurgence of these phenomena.

With respect to the fight against impunity, it is worth noting the progress made by the Government, in particular in the handling of cases stemming from the 2012 crisis. The start of the trial of Aliou Mahamane Touré and the verdict sentencing him to 10 years of incarceration has aroused a glimmer of hope for the many victims of abuse and serious violations of human rights committed since the beginning of the crisis. In this regard, I would stress that what is being sought is that all perpetrators of such violations and abuses be held accountable for their actions, whatever the context or circumstances of their occurrence. The ultimate objective of the support the United Nations is giving the Government of Mali is to fight impunity, ensure access to justice for all and preserve the rule of law and democracy. Further, intensified redeployment of security and judicial authorities and the strengthening of transitional justice mechanisms to prevent impunity from promoting a culture of do-it-yourself pseudo-justice is essential.

In addition, the Security Council sanctions regime that was recently set up under resolution 2374 (2017) rightly represents an important turning point in the fight against impunity and in guaranteeing respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. The sanctions regime is an important lever against those who would pose obstacles to the smooth unfolding of the peace process. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) will continue to provide assistance to State institutions, with which it maintains a regular dialogue. The dialogue aims, inter alia, at promoting exchanges about cases of human rights violations and abuses that have been documented throughout the country in order to allow appropriate legal action to be taken in accordance with international human rights obligations. The forthcoming establishment of the international commission of inquiry will work in this direction.

As for MINUSMA, it continues to face significant challenges resulting from the activities of extremist groups and other terrorists that have formed criminal networks. These are the main obstacles to a return to peace, in particular because the groups are enemies of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The almost daily loss of United Nations peacekeepers, caused by improvised explosive devices or land mines, particularly on the main supply lines of the Mission, has become unbearable and unsustainable. The death of three peacekeepers and the wounding of four others and a Malian civilian contractor who has since died, in Gao on 24 September, is a small but perfect illustration of this fact. Unfortunately, many questions remain unanswered, including the identity of the perpetrators. That is why we are urging the Government and the signatory groups to accelerate their implementation of the Agreement and their efforts aimed at reconciliation, so that, first of all, we can figure out who is who and pool our capacities in order to address the situation together.

With regard to the fight against improvised explosive devices, we intend to undertake several actions in the coming days, but a global approach is required, starting with a strategic vision, including finding backers and technicians, who mostly come from abroad, as they are not Malians, as well as attracting associated financial mechanisms. It is also high time for the escort battalion convoy and the regional quick reaction force to be fully deployed to give the Mission the freedom of action it needs.

In the light of all the threats faced by MINUSMA and the entire United Nations family in Mali, we reiterate the funding needs, which are growing — we will not hide that fact — given the need for investment to protect against indirect attacks and improve surveillance, detection and early-warning and alarm systems. These are some of the protective measures designed to mitigate the loss of life resulting from indirect attacks on the MINUSMA camps, even

though, for some time now, outside patrols have limited these indirect attacks. Technological upgrades are also welcome.

The establishment of the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) provides us with an opportunity that could contribute to creating a climate conducive to the proper execution of MINUSMA's mandate. It is important to note that a holistic approach that goes beyond the use of military force and ensures coherence with the peace process, development initiatives and the African Union peace and security architecture is necessary. At the request of the Secretary-General, an exploratory mission comprising representatives of MINUSMA, all headquarter departments and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel visited the capitals of the G-5 Sahel countries and the Force Headquarters based in Sévaré in early September. This mission noted the countries of the region's commitment to operationalizing the Force conjointe.

We welcome the ongoing exchanges between the G-5 Sahel countries and their partners, including at the high-level event in New York organized by Mali in the context of the General Assembly and at the Berlin meeting held on 19 September. In this regard, we reiterate the Secretary-General's call for substantial and sustained international support for the G-5 Sahel initiative. The events that took place yesterday at Mali's border with Niger are a cause for concern.

Pursuant to resolution 2364 (2017), consultations are under way to determine which responsibilities may be transferred to the United Nations country team. It should be noted, however, that this transfer of responsibility will take place only gradually and in the medium and long terms, because the challenges are enormous. I need only cite problems of access and resources, among others. These are factors that contribute to the increase in humanitarian needs.

In that regard, and as Council members know, in 2017 humanitarian actors launched a $305 million appeal to meet needs in the areas of health care, water, nutrition, food security, protection, education and shelter. However, as Council members also know, the humanitarian response plan was funded only at just over 35 per cent, which still allowed the Government and its partners to assist thousands of Malian citizens in the north who have been affected by the conflict. With respect to the Peacebuilding Fund, it is worth noting that Mali has received nearly $17 million, which has been used to finance some 11 projects, and through funding for the region we have received $3 million for a programme linking Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Annadif for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to congratulate and commend Ethiopia for the effective manner in which it conducted the work of the Security Council the month of September, and to wish you, Sir, and your delegation success in leading the Council this month.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif for his briefing today.

To begin, I would like I would like to reflect on the juncture at which Mali is today, with a security situation that has seriously deteriorated; a precarious humanitarian situation resulting primarily from insecurity; an Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali that has been in effect for more than two years, but continues to await implementation; a newly established Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017); a peacekeeping operation on the ground enjoying the most robust and lethal mandate of its kind; and a joint multinational force to counter terrorism that is supposed to begin operations in the near future. Uruguay welcomes the establishment of a joint force by the Group of Five for the Sahel, and encourages such subregional initiatives to address the challenges accompanied by national ownership. Nevertheless, the civilian population in Mali continues to fall prey to the actions of terrorist groups, the repeated clashes among armed groups and the absence of State authority primarily in the northern half of the country.

We regret that the situation in the Republic of Mali continues to deteriorate, largely owing to the actions of terrorist and extremist groups, which are enemies of the peace and reconciliation process, but also of additional and deep concern are the violations of the provisions of the Agreement by the signatory groups themselves. Uruguay reiterates and emphasizes that the primary responsibility for public order and the protection of civilians in the Republic of Mali lies with its authorities.

The international community, in particular the United Nations, is assisting the Government in its efforts to shoulder the responsibilities that intrinsically befall it as a sovereign country. The international community indeed has been supporting Mali in its efforts to achieve peace in the country in a number of ways, including by making financial contributions for the development of projects in the north of the country; establishing and strengthening the mandate of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); and carrying out peacebuilding projects under the aegis of the Peacebuilding Fund, as well as visits by the Secretary-General and missions of the Security Council.

We believe that it is necessary and urgent to adopt a multidimensional approach to address the root causes fuelling the conflict in Mali. Areas such as social development, providing basic services to the population, access to justice and creating jobs should be among the priorities, along with initiatives pertaining to security, if we want to achieve long-term stability.

We note with concern the repeated allegations of human rights violations committed by armed groups and security forces in the country. In that regard, Uruguay calls for all security activities, including those deployed to counter terrorism, to be carried out in strict compliance with the norms of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as to ensure that all due process guarantees be accorded to the alleged victims of those violations. Those responsible for committing those violations must be held accountable.

We welcome the establishment of the sanctions regime pursuant to resolution 2374 (2017), in response to the request of the Government of Mali. We must not lose sight of the fact that the imposition of those sanctions constitutes an additional tool for the Council to achieve sustainable peace in Mali, but at the same time we must continue to use the other tools at our disposal, including operations deployed on the ground, mediation and good offices, among others, while always keeping within the framework of Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation as the cornerstone of the political process. But what is most important is continuing dialogue and the commitment to the agreements by all the signatories.

Lastly, we would like to express our support and appreciation to MINUSMA and the troop-contributing countries that are doing commendable work in an adverse environment and with limited capacities, but — beyond any doubt — with outstanding courage, goodwill and devotion to carrying out their mandate.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to underscore its appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia and his team for their outstanding presidency of the Security Council last month, and joins the representative of Uruguay in wishing the French presidency every success for this month.

Bolivia appreciates the briefing given by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif, and welcomes the presence of Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, We thank France for having convened and organized this briefing.

Bolivia regrets and condemns the attacks perpetrated by armed groups against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in the Gao region on 24 September. We convey our condolences to the families of those attacked and to the Government and the people of Bangladesh for the loss of three members of the peacekeeping force. We also express our appreciation to the personnel of MINUSMA who have stepped up their work so as to complete the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, while facilitating political dialogue through mediation, good offices and cooperation with the Malian Government. Similarly, we acknowledge the work of the Government and the President of the Republic of Mali, aimed at bringing about a definitive ceasefire and cessation of hostilities by initiating the national plans and taking national political measure that are fundamental to achieving peace and stability in Mali.

In that regard, it is important that to analyse the root causes of the crisis, including the consequences of intervention and the regime change policies carried out in Libya in 2011, leading to destabilization and the ensuing chaos and terrorism that fuelled national conflicts in the Sahel and Libya.

We express our concern about the lack of material, technological, logistical and intelligence capacities suffered by MINUSMA, which impedes it from effectively being able to effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate in a very volatile environment

encompassing asymmetrical attacks that jeopardize the political process, the safety of the members of the Mission and the civilian population.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/811), during the reporting period from June to September, 44 attacks were carried out by terrorist and extremist armed groups, of which 21 were against MINUSMA, 10 targeted French forces, and 13 targeted the Malian defence and security forces. Those statistics represent an increase of 102 per cent in the number of attacks. Moreover, owing to those asymmetrical attacks, the protection of civilians has deteriorated. Armed groups continue to carry out violent acts in the Ménaka, Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu and, especially, Kidal regions where we have also seen a breakdown in relations among the Coordination des movements de l'Azawad, the Tuareg and the Platform coalition of armed groups.

The humanitarian situation is also a source of concern largely because of the clashes among non-State armed groups engaged in activities of serious concern, including forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, the recruitment of children and sexual abuse and violence. Their actions and hold over large swathes of the territory have led to the increase of internally displaced persons and refugees, who to date number more than 3,000. More than 140,000 Malians have sought refuge across the border in neighbouring countries. Bolivia calls on all armed groups to lay down their weapons, join the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and abide by all the provisions of the 2015 Agreement.

In conclusion, we urge the international community to continue its unwavering efforts to bring about peace and stability Mali once and for all. We believe that supporting the Maii Government is key to achieving lasting peace, while firmly respecting the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

We also welcome the initiative of the French presidency to organize a visit to the region, which will allow us to gain first-hand understanding of the situation in the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of Mali.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I am very happy to see you, Mr. President, presiding over the Security Council this month. I wish you and the entire French delegation every success in as you guide the work of the Council and assure you of the full cooperation of Mali in those endeavours.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the outstanding work of our brother Ambassador Tekeda Alemu and the Ethiopian delegation during their presidency of the Council last month.

I particularly welcome the forthcoming visit of the members of the Security Council to three countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). We will be very happy to welcome Council members to Bamako on 19 October.

I also take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and all the women and men of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), under the leadership of our brother Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for their ongoing commitment and sacrifice alongside the people of Mali in their quest for peace, stability and development.

On behalf of the Government of Mali, I take note of the report (S/2017/811) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali from June to September, and thank the Special Representative for his briefing, which brings me to make the following observations.

At the outset, I should like to welcome the clarifications made by the Special Representative on the period covered by the report, in which the Secretary-General states that "almost no progress was made in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali" (*S/2017/811, para. 77*). I thank the Special Representative for his efforts in that regard. Indeed, the Government of Mali was astonished at that assertion, which at first glance gives the impression of widespread inertia regarding the implementation of the Agreement, despite the efforts of the Government of Mali and the international community.

The Government of Mali recognizes the difficulties that have plagued the peace process, but it considers that remarkable progress has been made in the implementation of the Agreement, a product of the Algiers process. Today, that is evidenced in the recognition by all the secular and republican signatory armed groups of the State of Mali and, above all, the fact that national unity is contested by no signatory

to the Agreement. It is also evidenced in the effective cessation of hostilities between the armed groups and the Malian defence and security forces, which continues to this day.

To that end, I welcome and recall the conclusions of the high-level meeting on the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, held in New York on 20 September. At the end of the meeting, the participants

> "took note of the substantial progress made in its implementation since the Ministerial Meeting of 23 September 2016. They noted, among others, the holding of the Conference for national understanding, the establishment of the National Integration and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commissions and the National Council for Security Sector Reform as well as the efforts underway to pursue institutional reforms, notably the establishment of the second chamber of parliament in line with the provisions of the Peace Agreement and on an inclusive basis. Also, noting that the implementation of the Peace Agreement had entered in its third year, participants stressed the need for additional progress in the coming months".

The Secretary-General has expressed satisfaction in his previous reports and hailed the progress made in the implementation of the Agreement and the commitment of the Government of Mali, led by President of the Republic His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, to pursuing his efforts. Such satisfaction makes it clear that the peace process is well under way, despite the difficulties.

Despite all the challenges, I can assure the Council that the Government of Mali remains committed to expediting the implementation of the Agreement, because we are convinced that there is no credible alternative to that peaceful solution to the crisis, in particular in light of the agreement that was concluded today among all Malian actors. I understand the impatience of the Secretary-General, the members of the Council and our other partners with the delays in implementing the Agreement. I know that the Council also understands the complex challenges facing our peace process, many of which are out of the hands of the Government of Mali.

At the domestic level, the lack of trust and persistent tensions between the two signatory movements constitute a major concern for the Government. The deadly clashes between the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and the Platform coalition of armed groups last July in the Kidal region are a perfect example of that. Faced with a situation that jeopardizes the peace process, the Government has turned to its own national crisis-settlement mechanisms. Thus, the efforts of the religious and traditional leaders of Mali, together with those of the High Representative of the President of the Republic of Mali for the Implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement, have restored calm and enabled the signing of a ceasefire agreement between the two armed groups. Those efforts also allowed for the return of the Governor of Kidal. In that regard, I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Mali and his team.

Those positive dynamics need to be reinforced. I welcome the adoption of resolution 2374 (2017), through which the Security Council instituted a sanctions regime against the spoilers of the peace process in Mali, at the request of the Malian Government. Yes, we asked for sanctions, but we asked for sanctions that would be fair, transparent and equitable, to be used as an additional means to pressure the Malian parties to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement, with a view to achieving the legitimate lasting peace that our people await.

However, I would like to point out that the delays in the implementation of the Agreement are also and above all attributable to the deterioration of the security situation, characterized by asymmetrical attacks on the Malian defence and security forces , which are on the front line of the fight against terrorism. Those attacks have also targeted Blue Helmets, the French forces, civilians and even the signatories of the Agreement.

Regarding the other dimensions of the implementation of the Agreement, the Government's resolve remains steadfast. Joint patrols are becoming increasingly operational, as are the interim authorities and the emergency plan for the development of the northern regions. The State will step up its efforts to provide basic social services and peace dividends to the populations affected by the crisis.

Municipal and regional elections are planned before the end of the year. Only today, the Council of Ministers decided to hold the elections on 17 December. The Government of Mali has already acquired the materials for the elections.

With regard to the holding of the referendum and regional and local elections, I am pleased to announce to the Council that, under the budget amendment adopted by the National Assembly on 25 August, the Government of Mali has fully addressed the issue of the CAF18 billion gap mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. That is therefore no longer an issue.

Similarly, I would like to recall the promulgation by the President, on 2 October, of the law on the code for territorial communities, the law on the self-administration of local and regional authorities and the law on the special status of the Bamako district. Many of the provisions are intended to meet our commitments in the context of the Peace Agreement.

I should like to emphasize that, at the request of a certain part of the national community, the President has decided to postpone — and I underscore that it is merely a postponement, wheres the report mentions staying the referendum — the holding of the referendum on the draft review of the Constitution of Mali. However, the Head of State remains determined to pursue that major reform, as he believes it to be indispensable for the future of our country.

With regard to the processes of cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the Government of Mali calls on the signatory movements to cooperate in good faith in order to ensure the success of those programmes, which are crucial for the stabilization and restoration of security in our country.

For its part, the Government of Mali, which has already made enormous financial commitments, will respect all its obligations in the context of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. In that regard, the draft State budget for the financial year 2018, which is currently under consideration by the National Assembly, duly takes into account the need to finance the implementation of commitments undertaken through the Malian Peace Agreement.

In parallel with the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Mali, the Government is paying particular attention to the situation in the central regions of the country. As a result of that commitment on the central regions, we have appointed Mr. Mahmoud Dicko, Chair of the High Islamic Council, to work towards dialogue and reconciliation between the communities of the Mopti and Ségou regions. We have already seen very encouraging and appreciable results. In Ségou, the Prime Minister has just chaired the forum for peace in the fourth region, the conclusions of which have made it possible to hope for a gradual easing of the situation in the central regions. That is a concrete example of Malians themselves taking national ownership of the process.

As in previous reports, in the present report the Secretary-General expresses his concern about human rights violations in Mali — a situation of great importance. With regard to the cases of human rights violations and attackes listed in the report, the Government of Mali would of course like more information on the localities concerned.

With regard to the arrest of persons by the Malian authorities for acts of terrorism, the report mentions 116 persons arrested for terrorism, including 106 released persons, including five boys and two women. Information gathered from our judicial services since the publication of the report shows that it is rather four boys, not five. While it is a small difference, I think it is important to be precise. The four were handed over to the Regional Director of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family from the beginning of their questioning.

In addition, the report indicates that 239 people were detained for terrorism, including five boys, and that they were still in custody in State institutions. For our part, the technical services in charge of the issue have told us that out of a total of 277 people who were taken to the Judicial Investigations Service of the National Gendarmerie, 50 had arrest warrants for suspicion of terrorism. In 2017, out of 102 cases heard in the court of assizes, four individuals were convicted of violations of human rights or attempts to undermine human rights. On 31 August, at least 52 persons out of 132 plaintiffs were summoned by magistrates. Although no trial has been officially opened, the procedure is following its legally outlined course. For its part, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up by the Government has gathered 5,267 testimonies from victims and witnesses.

In any event, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Mali to respecting and upholding the norms of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. All cases reported in areas under Government control are systematically investigated and subsequent prosecutions are initiated against the alleged perpetrators. There is not, nor

will there ever be, impunity in the matter of human rights violations.

The Government of Mali welcomed the adoption of resolution 2364 (2017), which renews the mandate of MINUSMA. The resolution, which follows resolution 2295 (2016), calls upon MINUSMA to take a more proactive stance and endows it with a more robust mandate. However, it is clear that the major innovations brought about by the resolution have not been reflected in the situation on the ground. Accordingly, the Government of Mali strongly hopes that the operational capacities of MINUSMA will be strengthened by the Security Council in order to enable it to implement its mandate fully and effectively. I welcome the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General made the same point.

Equally important is the strengthening of cooperation between MINUSMA and the Malian defence and security forces. I know that the Special Representative is equally committed to that important aspect, which will one day allow for the gradual withdrawal of the Mission. In particular, I would like to highlight the need and urgency of supporting the Maliand defence and security forces in their daily struggle against terrorism on the ground. That support need not wait for the completion of the reform process to be carried out. I welcome the fact that such a central issue has been taken into account by resolution 2364 (2017).

Similarly, the Government of Mali welcomes the inclusion in the renewed mandate of the important issue of MINUSMA's support for the restoration of the State's authority throughout the country, including through the return of the administration and Malian defense and security forces in all regions of the north of the country, particularly Kidal.

As the Council knows, the crisis in Mali is not a solely domestic one. It has regional and international dimensions, which are marked by terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in human beings. That is what brought about the creation of the Group of Five for the Sahel G-5 Sahel (G-5) Joint Force, whose deployment the Security Council welcomed. I also welcome the holding of the G-5 high-level meeting in New York, which featured the participation of the Heads of State of G-5 Sahel, the President of the French Republic, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. As a result of that meeting, I would like to call for more substantial and more consistent support from our bilateral and multilateral partners, with a view to mobilizing the necessary resources for the effective operationalization and efficient deployment of the Joint force. I call on all of our partners to participate actively in the planning and pledging conference for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force scheduled for mid-December in Brussels.

The violent and deadly clashes yesterday on the Niger-Mali border once again remind us of the urgent need for the rapid operationalization of the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. The current Chair of the G-5 Sahel, President Keita, has just issued a communiqué in which he condemns what took place yesterday in the strongest possible terms. He also reminds us of the urgent need to ensure that the G-5 Sahel Joint Force be operationalized as soon as possible in order to ensure that it can withstand those who are seeking to destabilize the entire region, including terrorists and armed groups.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the President of the Republic, to convey our sincere condolences to the people and the Government and the people of the Niger and the Government and the people of the United States of America. We must continue to stand together to keep up the pressure on these terrorist groups and win this battle.

I thank every member of the Security Council for their continued, invaluable support to Mali and to the ongoing peace process. I reiterate the eternal gratitude of the people and the Government of Mali to the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and all MINUSMA personnel, the troop-contributing countries, the members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, led by Algeria, and all other partner countries and institutions for their continued and multiform support to the peace and stabilization process in our country. On behalf of the people and the Government of Mali, I also pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of the Malian crisis — civilian and military, foreigners and nationals — who have fallen with honour in the line of duty in Mali.

In conclusion, I reiterate the resolute commitment of the President of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, to maintain and intensify his efforts in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali in the higher interests

of Mali and its people. The President is acutely aware of its responsibilities, but also and above all convinced that improving the situation in Mali will have a positive impact on peace and security in the Sahel and on international peace and security, which is the Council's primary responsibility.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.